

Top Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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7 November 1966

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

Contact with enemy forces has subsided in Operation ATTLEBORO, the major US sweep operation in Tay Ninh Province. The North Vietnamese appear to be making an effort to spell out in softer tones what they require as proof that the US accepts the DRV's four points as the basis for a settlement of the war.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Contact with enemy forces has subsided in Operation ATTLEBORO; US forces are continuing their sweep north of Tay Ninh city (Paras. 1-4). A light engagement between US and Communist troops was reported by American forces participating in Operation GERONIMO I, presently being conducted in coastal Phu Yen Province (Para. 5). A prisoner has revealed that elements of the 271st Viet Cong Regiment have been involved with supply missions in Tay Ninh Province (Para. 6). The Viet Cong have issued an order to draft 17- to 38-year-old men in Phong Dinh and An Giang provinces (Paras. 7-9).

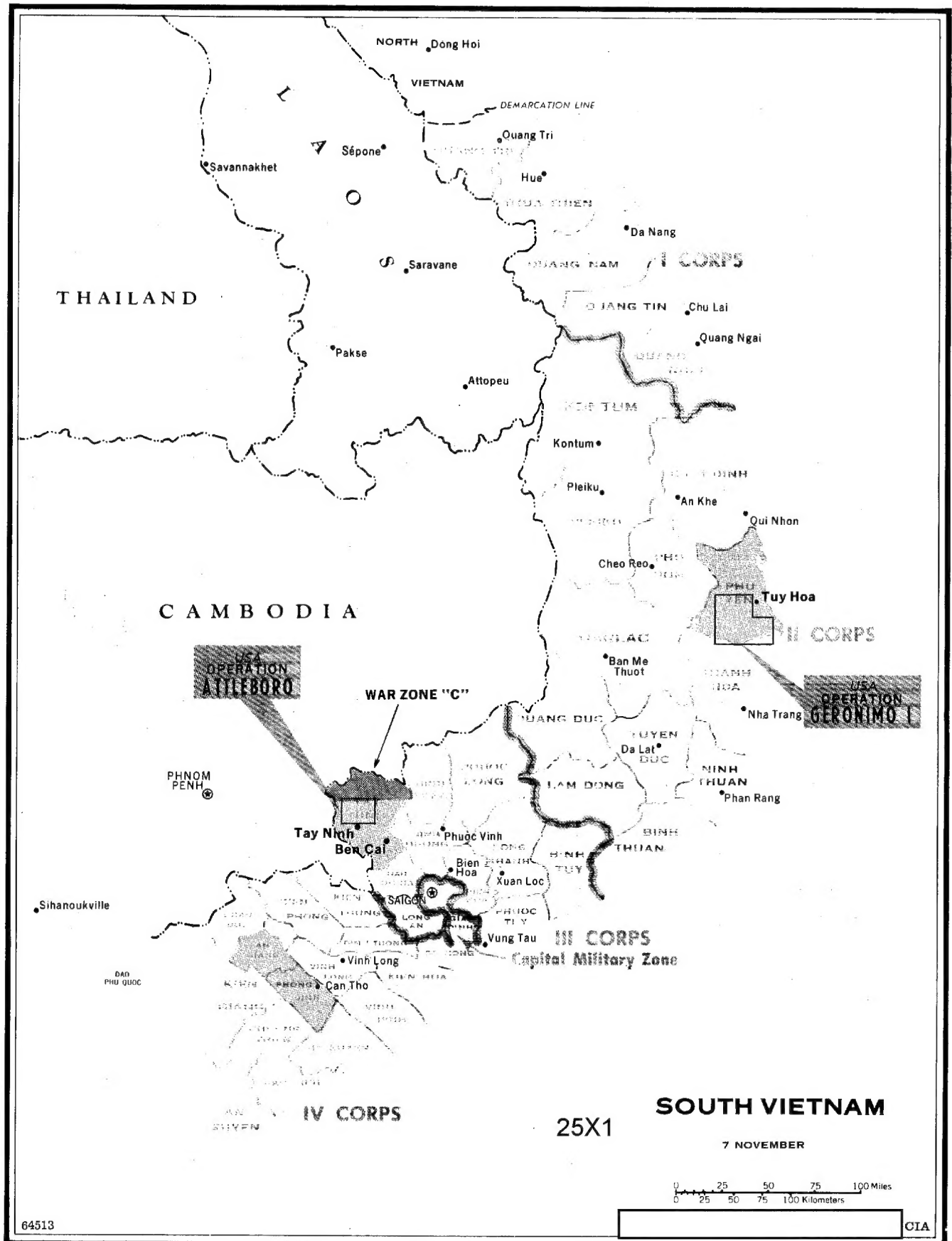
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Vietnamese labor leader Tran Quoc Buu is once more optimistic about his relations with the government (Paras 1-2). The Peoples Bloc again demonstrated its dominance during the selection of the three remaining permanent committees of the Constituent Assembly (Paras. 3-4). Article 20--the government's controversial veto over the work of the assembly--may come up for discussion in the assembly some time this week (Para. 5).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: The North Vietnamese appear to be making an effort to spell out in somewhat softer tones what they require as proof that the US accepts the DRV's four points as the basis for a settlement of the war (Paras. 1-2). The US Embassy in Saigon assesses the chances of the Liberation Front forming a government in the near future (Paras. 3-4). Hanoi is stepping up its propaganda support for Bertrand Russell's mock war-crimes trial (Para. 5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. American troops are continuing their sweep of the area of Tay Ninh Province where heavy fighting was reported over the weekend. Only sporadic sniper fire was reported today. A total of 13 US maneuver battalions have been committed to Operation ATTLEBORO, the American search-and-destroy operation being conducted north of Tay Ninh city near Viet Cong War Zone "C."

2. The American troops encountered no enemy resistance while seizing four Viet Cong base camps and huge quantities of food and ammunition early today. The US soldiers swept through a complex of enemy bunkers which had been stoutly defended until tactical air strikes and artillery apparently forced a retreat.

3. There have been several reports of truck convoy activity near the Cambodian border at several widely scattered points. These convoys may be bringing in supplies and reinforcements, or they may be used by retreating enemy forces to provide transportation to sanctuary in Cambodia.

4. Revised casualty figures now show a total of 46 Americans have been killed and 199 wounded as compared with Communist losses of 433 killed, seven captured, and 54 suspects apprehended.

5. Units of the three-battalion US search-and-destroy Operation GERONIMO I were attacked by an estimated Viet Cong platoon early today in coastal Phu Yen Province. The encounter took place about 20 miles northwest of the province capital of Tuy Hoa. Five American soldiers were killed and nine wounded during the 30-minute firefight. Communist losses were seven killed; five individual weapons were also captured.

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Elements of the 271st Viet Cong Regiment in Tay Ninh Province

6. A Viet Cong prisoner, captured on 6 November by American forces in Tay Ninh Province, stated that he belonged to a subordinate unit of the 271st Viet Cong Regiment. His company arrived in an area about 13 miles northeast of Tay Ninh city--near where he was captured--on 3 November en route to Bu Cui on a resupply mission. Bu Cui is reportedly the southern terminus of Viet Cong supply routes in Tay Ninh Province. The prisoner's unit was informed that American troops were in the area and they were ordered to stay and prepare for a countersweep.

Viet Cong Draft Order

7. The Viet Cong Provincial Committees of the delta provinces of Phong Dinh and An Giang have ordered subordinate hamlets and villages to force male individuals from ages 17 to 38 to join the ranks of the local guerrillas [REDACTED]

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8. The men will be formed into squads and platoons. When their strength is equivalent to a company, they will be sent away for military training. Following this training, the troops will be used to replace casualties in Viet Cong main force battalions.

9. This method of selecting and training replacements has been utilized throughout many of the delta provinces in an effort to provide the necessary replacements. As Viet Cong casualty rates increase and other methods of replacement fall short, the use of forced drafts can be expected to increase.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Tran Quoc Buu, president of the Vietnamese Labor Confederation (CVT), is once more optimistic about his relations with the government after a friendly chat with Premier Ky on 4 November. According to Buu, Ky was "astonished" when Buu recounted an alleged police plot to assassinate Buu. Earlier, Buu had gone into hiding for several days after being informed of the plot. Ky reportedly assured Buu that neither he nor the CVT had anything to fear from the government. If there were any truth in the alleged plot, Ky said, it could not be blamed on police director Loan but on "persons around Loan."

2. Although Buu has privately been advocating Loan's removal [redacted] he did not make this suggestion to Ky during their meeting. However, Buu claimed that Ky intimated that certain unspecified checks would be placed on Loan's power.

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Constituent Assembly Developments

3. In a brief session on 4 November, the Constituent Assembly elected the membership of its three remaining permanent committees--press and information, budget and finance, and people's aspirations. The committee members were chosen in the same manner as those of the drafting committee, with each bloc in the assembly nominating a number of its members proportional to its strength in the assembly.

4. The Peoples Bloc--composed of northerners, Catholics, and Dai Viet Party members from central Vietnam--is heavily represented on these three committees, as it is on the constitution drafting committee. In later internal sessions of these three committees, Peoples Bloc members were elected to all three committee chairmanships. According to one member of the bloc, the Dai Viet leadership of the Peoples Bloc will soon be replaced by a more representative balance of Catholics and other elements within the bloc. One of the main reasons for this change, according to the source, will be to make the bloc more attractive to other assembly delegates in the hope of gaining more members.

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5. The US Embassy has reported that during the 4 November session Dr. Phan Quang Dan attempted to introduce a discussion of Article 20 of the decree law--the government's controversial veto over such work of the assembly as lacks a two-thirds majority. His attempt was overruled by chairman Phan Khac Suu, but the embassy believes that Article 20 may come up for discussion when the assembly reconvenes this week.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Without changing the substance of their demands, the North Vietnamese appear to be making an effort to spell out in somewhat softer tones what they require from the US as proof that it accepts Hanoi's four points as the basis for a settlement of the war. Mai Van Bo, the DRV representative in Paris, was quoted on 7 November by Radio Paris as saying that the US should prove its "good faith" by an unconditional end to the air strikes and "all other" acts of war against North Vietnam and by recognizing the Liberation Front as the "spokesman to solve all questions" in South Vietnam.

2. This language is almost identical with that used in late September by Premier Pham Van Dong when he stated that the Front should be recognized as the "interlocutor" for the South Vietnamese. This formulation may be designed to soften the image of inflexibility presented by Hanoi's propaganda insistence that the Front is the "sole, genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people." This latter formula was used on 7 November by Hanoi radio but not in the context of "proof" that the US accepts the DRV's four points.

US Embassy Assessment of Liberation Front's Status

3. The US Embassy in Saigon recently assessed the status of the Liberation Front in reviewing what it believed to be indications that the Front might form a government in the near future. The embassy concluded that such an eventuality cannot be ruled out. The assessment took note of news reports from Algiers and Cairo that Front representatives there had suggested that a government might be formed shortly. Reference was also made to Sihanouk's 3 November statement that he considered the Liberation Front a government.

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4. Despite these indications, there are persuasive reasons against such a move, aside from such problems as the lack of a secure territorial base and the failure of the Communists to attract well-known personalities. For example, the Communists would be foreclosing certain important options should they proclaim a provisional government. Such a move would make it much more difficult for Communists and pro-Communists to be accepted by the US and GVN at any future negotiations. It should be noted also that it is unlikely that the Front will ever form itself into a government. This is not in the Vietnamese Communist tradition. When and if a coalition government is announced by the Communists, it will not replace the Front but be an addition to it.

Hanoi Stepping Up Support for Mock War Crimes Trial

5. Hanoi appears to be stepping up its propaganda support of Bertrand Russell's war-crimes trial, probably in connection with the preliminary meeting, scheduled for London this month, of some of the organizers of the "tribunal." Hanoi radio has given heavy play in the past few weeks to alleged civilian casualties caused by recent US bombing raids--particularly charging that there have been bombings of schools. Hanoi has also played host to a North Korean representative of the "Korean Committee on US War Crimes in Vietnam." According to an AFP report from Hanoi, Ralph Schoenmann, Bertrand Russell's top aide, arrived in Hanoi on 4 November. DRV representatives abroad are simultaneously calling press conferences to release "documents compiled by the Hanoi Commission for Investigating US War Crimes in Vietnam." Both the DRV ambassador in Moscow and the chargé in Sofia called such press conferences on 5 November.

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